

## Going full-time with the 1-204th

*Robin Alexander of the House community in Neshoba County submitted this "Bragging Rights" story about her husband, Capt. David S. Alexander of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 204th Air Defense Artillery, 1st Battalion.*

**By Robin Alexander**

special to The Star

I want to brag on Capt. David Alexander because of the many sacrifices he has made.

David has been in the Army National Guard for 12 years. During that time, he has had to be away from home for various schools.

In May 2003, his battalion, the 1-204th ADA, was activated to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom. It was hard for me to face his activation, but his view was, "That's what I'm in the Guard for."

We have a 9-year-old son, Joshua, and a 5-year-old daughter, Molli. David was away from us for 14 months. And, though it was extremely difficult for all of us, David never regretted being able to serve his country. We are all very proud of him for standing up for the rights of Americans.

During his activation, his unit was tasked with helping protect the Washington, D.C., area. While on the D.C. mission, David was also assigned to head a mission to provide air defense for the president at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Because of his duties, he wasn't able to come home to visit as often as other members of his unit. Though he missed holidays, birthdays, and the entire school year, he still felt honored to have been chosen to serve.

Once David returned home, he made the decision to make a career of the military. He is now a full-time captain with the 1-204th.

I think he definitely deserves a pat on the back for all that he has done, and continues to do, for this country. He is setting a great example for his children. They and I are very proud of him for being the man that he is.



**Capt. David S. Alexander**

## Coping with separation in Iraq, staying mentally prepared

*East Mississippi Community College operates a satellite campus at Naval Air Station Meridian. Dennex McClendon is a student there, working toward a degree in behavioral science.*

*Dennex has two sons, Markeas Jones and Tre-son Cole. She married Andrew E. McClendon, a U.S. Navy air traffic controller, in October. He left for Diego Garcia in December.*

*In addition to her studies, Dennex works at the fitness center on base as a personal trainer and aerobics teacher. That's where she met Senior Chief Timothy Lockey, a hospital corpsman.*

*"Our family moved around due to father being in the military. He retired in 1973 and made his residence in Martin," Timothy said. "Since then, I have claimed Mississippi as my home."*

*Timothy is pursuing a master's degree from Troy State University, but he has one other goal: "I would like to be able to go to one of Dennex's aerobic sessions and not be almost dead when I finish."*

*Dennex's story is about how families cope with separation.*

**By Dennex McClendon**

special to The Star

In this day and age, we often wonder how our military men and women deal with the emotional trauma brought on by our war on terror — Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To get a better insight, I spoke with one of Mississippi's very own, Senior Chief Timothy Lee Lockey, a hospital corpsman.

Lockey graduated from West Lauderdale High School in 1977. He earned an associate's degree in farm business management and a bachelor's degree in health care adminis-



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### AEROBICS CLASS

Dennex McClendon, left, and Senior Chief Timothy Lockey became friends when he took her aerobics class at the fitness center at Naval Air Station Meridian.

tration. He's currently enrolled at Troy State University, pursuing an MBA in management/human resources.

He's been able to keep up with his education through wartime and this was a hard task. He has overcome many obstacles in his 21-plus years in the U.S. Navy — which includes a tour in Iraq.

### Orders for Iraq

Senior Chief Lockey left for Iraq on Feb. 9, 2003, and returned May 29, 2003.

"When I found out I was leaving for Iraq, I was stationed with the 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion as the leading chief petty officer for medical," Lockey said.

"I got word in November from the company first sergeant that there was a possibility that we would be going to war around the first of January. With the first sergeant giving us a heads-up, I was ready to go.

"I didn't join the Navy for school or glamour, but because my father, a retired chief petty officer, taught me the true

meaning of serving our country. So, it was not a big surprise and I was happy with doing my duty."

We often wonder how families deal with one of their members going to war — and we all know there is no easy way to deal with it.

Senior Chief Lockey's wife was very supportive. It was hard on him, but extra hard on Lence, his wife. It added more stress, worrying about her husband, keeping the household together, answering questions the kids had.

"She would not show any anger or frustration due to my deployment," Lockey said.

"I had been deployed for 30 to 60 days, and on a ship for six months at a time, so my wife and daughter were used to this, but war was a different feeling all together. Lence was fantastic through the whole thing."

### What it was like

I know when going to war you have to try and be mentally and physically prepared. Many

people think there's no way to do it, but Lockey found a way. He says the first step is "admitting to the fears and acknowledging the surroundings." He said his fears began to subside "when I passed through Nasariyah, dealing with people shooting at us."

Seeing U.S. firepower, and keeping his years of training in mind, he knew he would be fine.

"Granted, I still got shot at and almost blown up by mortars twice. However, I knew my family and God supported me and my reasons for surviving fill my mind daily," Lockey said.

"It is good to have support from your family and friends, even when you return. It will help our men and women overcome the things they faced, saw and did."

Lockey has returned home to a somewhat normal life. He says that if called upon again, he would not hesitate to go back to Iraq. He loves the military life, and though he is about to retire, he says he would stay in 50 more years if he could.